

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define student attendance and to provide structure for the procedures regarding student attendance, truancy, and enrollment. Because of the nature of being an online charter school, the definition of student attendance is not based entirely on seat time in a physical location but rather on the percentage of work completed by the student toward successful completion of coursework. This policy also recognizes that student attendance and course completion are a joint responsibility to be shared by the students and their parents or guardians. In accordance with Minnesota state laws concerning student attendance, the policy includes the school's truancy intervention processes.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Attendance, defined in Section III as work completion, is required of all students enrolled in the charter school. In accordance with MN state law, students who are not in attendance for 15 consecutive school days will be dropped from school enrollment. How attendance is tracked, how the school intervenes when attendance is excessive, and to which other agencies the school must report depends upon the age of the particular student in question. See Section IV for these procedures.

The charter school recognizes that the responsibility for student attendance belongs to the students and their parents/guardians in a partnership for overall communication and learning. The different responsibilities are as follows:

1. Students' Responsibilities
 - a. Students consistently log 20-25 hours/week of documented learning on the computer.
 - b. Students make adequate weekly progress (25% or more overall completion per week).
 - c. Students communicate questions, computer problems, and school struggles with their counselors or student achievement coordinators.
 - d. Attend all required testing days in required locations.
2. Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities
 - a. Parents/guardians ensure that the student is making adequate weekly progress.
 - b. Parents/guardians provide the student with access to the necessary tools for student success.
 - c. Parents/guardians inform the school in the event of an excusable student absence.
 - d. Parents/guardians work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise and take an active role in supporting the student in course completion.
3. The Charter School's Responsibilities
 - a. Monitor attendance, maintain accurate attendance records, and apply attendance policies uniformly.
 - b. Provide reports to parents and students concerning progress and inform students and parents/guardians of any attendance issues.
 - d. Work cooperatively with students and their parents/guardians to resolve any attendance problems that may arise.

III. DEFINITIONS

Absence – The failure of a student attend school virtually via one of the charter school's course delivery systems and/or the failure to complete coursework. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused (as defined below), students are required to make up all work and continue toward successful completion of coursework in order to receive credit in accordance with the policy which governance the granting of

credits. Students can avoid having absences (whether excused or unexcused) tracked by making adequate weekly progress in their assigned coursework or by working ahead in their coursework. When students anticipate future excused absences, they should work ahead in the weeks prior to the future excused absence in order to stay on track. When students encounter an unforeseen absence, they will need to make up that work time in the weeks following an excused or unexcused absence.

Attendance – This is not based on a student’s physical attendance in any one location at any given time. Attendance at an online school is work completion.

Day of attendance – Days of attendance are determined by work completion percentages and the amount of increase that occurs from one week to the next week. The charter school has determined that students must increase their course percentages by a total of 25% or more each week in order to be considered in attendance for 5 days in a school week. School weeks at the charter school are seven days long. The overall percentage completion increase can include work completed any hour of any day within the seven day period including work completed on weekends. However, the work must be turned in and graded within the grading period in order for it to be counted in that grading period. Students may accomplish this in a flexible model within each week.

Excused absence – An acceptable absence as determined by the school. The burden of proof for a student being excused from school is placed on the parent/guardian of the student. Determination of the excused nature of the absence is left to director discretion. Please note: students may attend school virtually from their home 24 hours a day seven days a week. Excused absences should be few, far between, and due to extreme circumstances. The very nature of an online school allows students to maintain attendance while circumstances would ordinarily prevent them from attending school. ***Students who maintain their adequate work completion percentages on a weekly basis will not be required to provide documentation except in the case of a pre-approved absence (family vacation, etc).*** The following reasons are examples which are recognized by the school as legitimate:

- a) Parent/doctor verified illness: an absence verified by a parent/guardian or doctor, in writing within **three days of the absence**. The excuse must specify the health condition and why it prevents attendance at the online school. Should the illness prevent them from attending school virtually from their home, a doctor’s note is required to verify the severity of the illness and the length of time anticipated that student would not be able to work online.
- b) Family emergencies: an absence resulting from a serious illness, injury or death of an immediate family member.
- c) School directed activities: absences for field trips, athletic trips, music trips or other school activities planned by the school.
- d) Prearranged family vacations: an exceptional circumstance which requires families to take a vacation during the school year. A pre-approved absence form must be submitted to the charter school director **30 days in advance** and be approved prior the absence in order for the absence to be excused. Work should be completed in advance of the absence in preparation for the absence.
- e) Suspension: as defined by the school board.
- f) Court appearances: an absence by a student who has been court ordered to appear and the absence has been previously arranged by the parent/guardian with the school. Proof of court order and of actual appearance is required to verify this type of absence.

- g) Computer problems: an absence by a student whose computer access is not working. This problem must be resolved within 24 hours. **A maximum of 1 day can be excused for this reason due to the student contract signed at the enrollment concerning alternate forms of computer access for students.**
- h) Exceptional circumstances: any other circumstances where permission may be granted at the discretion of the school principal, which is coordinated by the student with the principal, in advance or as the occasion arises. Example would be childbirth, hospitalization, detention center, etc.

Note: In almost all cases, online work and adequate progress toward course completion is expected.

Unexcused absence - An absence for reasons that are not recognized by the school authorities as legitimate. Unexcused absences are tracked for truancy and enrollment purposes. After any unexcused absence occurs, students are expected to return to successful completion of coursework in order to avoid truancy consequences and/or losing their enrollment in the charter school. The following are examples of unacceptable reasons for absence:

- a) Car trouble
- b) Visiting
- c) Over slept; alarm did not work
- d) Shopping
- e) Required to perform duties at home (i.e. babysitting, cleaning, or caring for a relative) that interfere with student's ability to complete schoolwork
- f) Family vacation (not prearranged)
- g) Work
- h) No email or call from the parent/guardian verifying the absence
- i) Computer issues of more than one 24 hour period in a week
- j) Personal (no reason given)
- k) Truancy, as defined in this document
- l) Other absences as determined on a case by case basis
- m) Missing required state testing

Extended absences – An absence of more than five consecutive school days. Students who accrue more than **five** consecutive absences must provide documentation for the absences to be considered excused absences. Students who are unable to provide this documentation are subject to attendance and truancy policies. Students who accrue **ten** consecutive absences will be warned that they are jeopardizing their enrollment in the charter school. Students who accrue **fifteen** consecutive unexcused absences will be dropped from the enrollment of the charter school, and, thereafter, would need to complete the enrollment application in order to be admitted back into school. No credit is earned in the time the student is not enrolled. A student absent for an extended period of time due to illness is eligible for a leave of absence. Parents should contact the principal to make these arrangements. If a student has suffered an extended long term illness and required work has not been completed, the student may request an extension by completing the extension request form seven days prior to the end of the term. The principal has the authority to grant or to deny the extension based on individual student circumstance. The online school's curriculum is available 24 hours a day/seven days a week from any computer.

Truancy – Not making adequate weekly progress in assigned coursework and providing documentation of

an excused nature of an absence. Truancy does not apply to students 18 years old or older. Students under the age of 18 are truant if they:

- a. Do not successfully complete an overall course percentage increase of 25% or more in a school week and do not provide documentation if an absence is excused.
- b. Sign into online course delivery system but do not complete any coursework.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. In order to make the online system work alongside traditional school attendance policies, a conversion from work completion over to days absent must occur. Attendance calculations are made each week for all students. This is done by determining the sum of percentage of change for all classes to determine a total overall completion percentage increase for each student.
 1. Adequate progress each week is 25% or more total overall completion increase.
 2. Completion percentages are then converted into the number of days:
 - i. 0% = 5 days absent.
 - ii. 1-6% = 4 days absent.
 - iii. 7-12% = 3 days absent.
 - iv. 13-18% = 2 days absent
 - v. 19-24% = 1 day absent
- B. Enrollment at MN schools requires attendance. By law, students who accrue 15 consecutive unexcused absences are dropped from the charter school enrollment. This policy applies **to all students** regardless of the age of the student. For students who are **18 years of age and older**, truancy does not apply; however, attendance is still monitored in order to comply with the Minnesota Statute concerning enrollment in the charter school.
 1. When a student has accrued **five days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school sends notification to the students of the absences along with the warning that continued absence totally 15 consecutive schools days will result in loss of enrollment in the charter school.
 2. When a student has accrued **ten days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school sends notification to the student of the absences along with the warning that continued absence totally 15 consecutive schools days will result in their loss of enrollment in the charter school.
 3. When a student has accrued **15 days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school drops the students from enrollment and sends notification to the student of that fact.
- C. For students who are under **18 years of age**, enrollment laws as well as truancy laws apply. The charter school must comply with the truancy procedures of each individual county in which students reside. For truancy, absences are totaled; the absences do not need to be consecutive school days for truancy to be in effect. In addition, the school tracks consecutive absences in order to comply with the Minnesota statutes concerning enrollment.
 1. When a student has accrued **three total days of unexcused absences**, the school notifies the student and parents/guardians with a warning letter concerning the absences, compulsory education laws, and the fact that the student is considered a continuing truant.
 2. Depending on the policies and procedures of a student's county of residence, the student will be referred to the county for early intervention when appropriate for the specific county.

3. When a student has accrued **seven cumulative days of unexcused absences**, the student is considered habitual truant. The school notifies the student and parents/guardians that the school has filed a truancy offense report with the student's county of residence. The school cooperates with the county from this point forward, and a school official attends court should the need arise.
4. When a student has accrued **ten days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the school sends notification to student/parent of their absences along with the warning that continued absence totally 15 consecutive schools days will result in their loss of enrollment in the charter school. In addition, the school will notify the student's county worker of the student's jeopardized enrollment.
5. When a student has accrued 15 **days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the school is required by Minnesota statute to drop the student from enrollment and sends notification to student/parent of that fact. In addition, the school will notify the student's country of the student's change in enrollment status.

V. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

Copies of this policy are available to all students and parents. Should the policy be changed in the middle of a school year, students and parents will be notified in a timely manner.

VI. LEGAL REFERENCES

Minn. Stat. 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. 120A.24 (Reporting)
Minn. Stat. 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)
Minn. Stat. 120A.28 (School Boards and Teachers, Duties)
Minn. Stat. 120A.30 (Attendance Officers)
Minn. Stat. 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)
Minn. Stat. 121A.40 – 121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)
Minn. Stat. 260A.02 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is Continuing Truant)
Goss v. Lopez, 419U.S. 565, 95 S. Ct. 729 (1975)
Slocum v. Holtan Board of Education, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. Ap. Ct. 1988)
Campbell v. Board of Education of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)
Hamer v. Board of Education of Township high School District No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d7 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School Dsitric R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App 1978)
Knight v. Board of Education, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E. 2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)
TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School Truancy Procedure

Cross References:

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)